

Bush Valley Landfill

EPA Region 3

Maryland

Harford County

Abingdon

EPA ID# MDD980504195

2nd Congressional District

Last Update: July 2002

Other Names:

Harris Landfill

Current Site Status

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is overseeing the cleanup of the Bush Valley Landfill, where construction of the landfill cap was completed in August 2001 and post construction monitoring is underway. When combined with environmental monitoring and land-use restrictions, the cap and gas management system will protect human health and the environment. The cap was seeded with warm-season grasses and native wildflowers. This area will remain a green space and wildlife habitat. The landfill will also serve as a buffer between developed areas and the neighboring Bush Declaration Natural Resources Management Area.

Site Description

The Bush Valley Landfill Site is located in Harford County, Maryland, one mile from the town of Abingdon. The site is located on a 29-acre parcel of land, approximately 16 of which are occupied by the actual landfill. The Bush Declaration Natural Resources Management Area,

a 120-acre tidal cattail marsh, borders the site to the north and east. Harford Town, a planned community, lies west of the Site across Bush Road. Three single family homes are located within 300 feet of the landfill's southern border.

Before 1974, the land was used for cattle grazing and raising crops. In 1974, a trash hauler leased the property and in 1975 the hauler contracted to provide landfill services for Harford County. That same year, the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) granted a permit to use the land as a municipal solid waste landfill. The landfill took in household and industrial wastes and may have also accepted industrial wastes. After ignoring DHMH's orders to stop site operations, the operator abandoned the site in 1983 when the landfill reached capacity.

The state of Maryland did inspections in 1983. In 1984, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) inspected the site and in 1988 the site was proposed as an addition to the National Priorities List. Sites on this list can be cleaned up using federal Superfund money if no other source of funding is available. In June 1990 Harford County started negotiations with EPA, resulting in an agreement that the County do the site studies.

These studies took place from 1991 to 1995, when a final report was approved. In 1995 EPA issued a proposed plan, outlining cleanup options and recommending a course of action. The final decision on how the site would be addressed was made later that year.

Site Responsibility

This site is being addressed through Federal, State, and potentially responsible parties' actions.

NPL Listing History


This site was proposed to the National Priorities List of the most serious uncontrolled or abandoned hazardous waste sites requiring long-term cleanup action on June 24, 1988. The site was formally added to the list on March 31, 1989, making it eligible for federal cleanup funds.

Threats and Contaminants

During site investigations, several volatile organic contaminants (VOCs) were detected, including: benzene, vinyl chloride, and tetrachloroethene. Metals including beryllium, arsenic and manganese have shown up in samples of ground water, surface water, soil, and leachate. The VOCs have appeared in air samples.

Investigators from EPA and Harford County observed several leachate seeps on the landfill's slopes during site investigation. The cleanup will eliminate these seeps and protect local ecology. Wetlands next to the site may be impacted by the contaminated ground water. Two private wells are located on properties next to the site, but all residences in the area have connected to a public water system for their drinking water supply.

EPA's 1993 Human Health Risk Assessment indicates that ground water is the only potential source of elevated risk if people are exposed to it. However, no residents currently use ground water in the area for their drinking or cooking. This assessment was not able to rule out air as potentially significant pathway, but additional air testing during the cleanup showed that the air is safe to breathe.

Contaminant descriptions and associated risk factors are available on the Agency for Toxic Substance and Disease Registry, an arm of the CDC, web site at <http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/hazdat.html> 

Cleanup Progress

Construction Started

Construction of the landfill cap was completed in August 2001. The cleanup plan includes an impermeable landfill cap to prevent further groundwater contamination paired with a landfill gas management system, plus environmental monitoring and land-use restrictions.

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Detailed public files (Administrative Record) on EPA's involvement and decisions at this site can be examined at the following locations:

U.S. EPA Region III
Public Reading Room
6th Floor Docket Room
1650 Arch Street
Philadelphia, PA 19103
215-814-3157
Please call ahead for an appointment.

Harford County Library
Bel Air Branch
100 Pennsylvania Avenue
Bel Air, MD 21014
410-638-3151